

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 041751 TOSEC 040150

NODIS

FROM ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY MULCAHY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AO

SUBJECT: ACTION MEMORANDUM: MEDIATION ON BEHALF OF SOUTH
AFRICA (S/S NO. 7603622)

THE PROBLEM:

SOUTH AFRICAN AMBASSADOR BOTHA CONTACTED SENATOR TUNNEY
EARLY FEB. 20 ASKING HIM WHETHER HIS STAFF AIDE, MARK
MORAN, MIGHT SERVE AS A POINT OF CONTACT TO MEDIATE
WITH THE MPLA IN AN EFFORT TO PREVENT ARMED CLASH BETWEEN
SAG AND CUBANS. AMB. BOTHA SUGGESTED THAT MORAN COULD
GO TO LUANDA OSTENSIBLY TO TRY AND OBTAIN RELEASE OF TWO
AMERICAN PILOTS BEING HELD THERE AFTER FORCED LANDING
IN NORTHERN ANGOLA. SENATOR TUNNEY PROMPTLY CONTACTED
ACTING SECRETARY INGERSOLL TO ASK STATE DEPARTMENT'S
ADVICE ON HOW HE SHOULD RESPOND TO PROPOSAL TO ACT AS
MEDIATOR ON BEHALF OF SAG.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

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THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS THAT SOUTH AFRICA IS ALREADY IN CONTACT WITH MPLA THROUGH THIRD COUNTRIES, SUCH AS IVORY COAST AND MOZAMBIQUE. FOR THEIR PART, MPLA HAVE SIGNALLED SOME WILLINGNESS TO REACH AN UNDERSTANDING WITH

PRETORIA. PRIME MINISTER NASCIMENTO EARLIER TOLD MORAN AND RECENTLY FRENCH EXPRESS CORRESPONDENT THAT LUANDA WAS PREPARED TO RESPECT SOUTH AFRICAN INTERESTS IN CUNENE DAM COMPLEX. ON OTHER HAND, MPLA PRESIDENT NETO WAS UNCOMPROMISING IN HIS CONDEMNATION OF SAG IN RECENT INTERVIEW WITH YUGOSLAV JOURNALIST. IT IS UNCLEAR, THEREFORE, WHETHER THERE IS BASIS FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN PRETORIA AND LUANDA.

FROM POLICY STANDPOINT, IT IS O,VIOUSLY IN US INTEREST TO ENCOURAGE UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN PRETORIA AND LUANDA WHICH WILL AVERT MILITARY CLASH BETWEEN ADVANCING CUBAN FORCES AND SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES ENTRENCHED ACROSS NAMIBIAN BORDER IN ANGOLA. WE HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED BY ADMITTEDLY INCONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE THAT SOME SORT OF MEDIATION EFFORT WAS IN PROCESS. AMB. BOTHA'S PROPOSAL NOW TO INVOLVE SENATOR TUNNEY IN THIS OPERATION SUGGESTS THAT EITHER MEDIATION THROUGH OTHER THIRD PARTIES HAS BROKEN DOWN AND SOUTH AFRICANS ARE GETTING DESPERATE, OR THAT PRETORIA SEES ANOTHER WAY OF INVOLVING THE US IN DEFENSE OF ITS INTERESTS. ALTERNATIVELY, IDEA WAS PROMOTED BY SENATOR TUNNEY WITH BOTHA ACQUIESCENCE.

SECOND PART OF AMBASSADOR BOTHA'S PROPOSITION IS MORE DUBIOUS. SENATOR TUNNEY AND PARTICULARLY MORAN HAVE BEEN PANTINGLY ANXIOUS TO EXPLOIT MORAN'S MEETING WITH MPLA OFFICIALS IN LUANDA IN CONNECTION WITH SENATOR'S ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN IN CALIFORNIA AGAINST RADICAL CONTENDER TOM HAYDEN. MORAN HAS ASKED AF WHETHER US IS IN CONTACT WITH MPLA, AND HE SEIZED ON INFORMATION THAT WE WERE TRYING TO SECURE RELEASE OF TWO AMERICAN PILOTS TO SUGGEST THAT HE COULD BE USEFUL BY CONTACTING MPLA LEADERSHIP. HE WAS ABOUT TO DO SO ON FEB. 20 WHEN WE RECEIVED NEWS FROM GENEVA THAT TWO PILOTS WERE BEING RELEASED ON FEB. 21. SHOULD MORAN GO TO LUANDA

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UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, HE WOULD NEED TO FIND SOME OTHER PRETEXT.

SENATOR TUNNEY CALLED BACK TO STRESS THE URGENCY OF GETTING INSTRUCTIONS TONIGHT. HE SAID THAT MORAN WAS PREPARED TO FLY TO LUANDA SATURDAY MORNING, AND THAT IF DEPARTMENT APPROVED HIS TRIP, HE SHOULD BE ARMED WITH LETTER STATING THAT HE HAD DEPARTMENT'S APPROVAL.

THE OPTIONS:

1. WE CAN ENCOURAGE MORAN TO PLAY THE ROLE OF MEDIATOR, PROPOSED BY AMBASSADOR BOTHA, GOING TO LUANDA ON SOME PRETEXT OTHER THAN RELEASE OF PILOTS.

ADVANTAGES:

-- IT IS VERY MUCH IN US INTERESTS TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO AVERT A MILITARY CLASH BETWEEN CUBAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES, SINCE IT WILL ALMOST INEVITABLY ESCALATE INTO FULL SCALE NORTH/SOUTH CONFRONTATION.

-- MPLA IS PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS AT PRESENT TIME TO GET INTO DIALOGUE WITH US LEADING TO RECOGNITION. THE RELEASE OF THE TWO PILOTS IS AN OBVIOUS GESTURE. WE MAY THEREFORE HAVE MORE LEVERAGE WITH LUANDA THAN OTHER MEDIATING POWERS.

-- PRETORIA'S DECISION TO SEEK SENATOR TUNNEY'S ASSISTANCE MAY REFLECT BREAK DOWN OF MEDIATION EFFORTS AND ABSENCE OF OTHER SUITABLE THIRD PARTIES.

-- MORAN'S APPROACH COULD PROVIDE PRETEXT FOR OPENING DIALOGUE WITH MPLA ON TERMS FACE SAVING TO BOTH SIDES.

-- IF SUCCESSFUL, SENATOR TUNNEY'S MEDIATION COULD PUT PRETORIA UNDER SOME OBLIGATION TO THE UNITED STATES.

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DISADVANTAGES:

-- SENATOR TUNNEY WILL CERTAINLY TRY TO EXPLOIT HIS MEDIATION EFFORT POLITICALLY, PROBABLY EXTENDING HIS MEDIATORY ROLE TO RELATIONS BETWEEN LUANDA AND WASHINGTON.

-- MORAN IS RATHER NAIVE AND QUITE INEXPERIENCED IN DEALING WITH FOREIGN OFFICIALS ON SENSITIVE ISSUES.

-- IT SEEMS STRANGE THAT SOUTH AFRICA SHOULD NOT BE ABLE TO FIND SOME OTHER GOVERNMENT PREPARED TO MEDIATE WITH LUANDA. IT WOULD APPEAR EITHER THAT IT IS TRYING TO IDENTIFY US MORE CLOSELY WITH SOUTH AFRICAN INTERESTS, OR THAT IT IS BEING USED SUBTLY BY MPLA TO BEGIN A DIALOGUE WITH WASHINGTON THROUGH THE DOOR OF US SENATE.

-- OUR POLICY IN AFRICA AND SPECIFICALLY OUR ANGOLA POLICY HAVE BEEN SEVERELY DAMAGED BY APPEARANCE OF POLITICAL/MILITARY COLLABORATION WITH SOUTH AFRICA. THERE IS NO REASON NOW WHEN THERE IS LESS RATIONALE FOR SOUTH AFRICAN EFFORT IN ANGOLA TO ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE CAUGHT AGAIN FLIRTING WITH PRETORIA.

2. WE SHOULD THANK SENATOR TUNNEY BUT TELL HIM THAT WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT IS IN US INTERESTS TO ACT AS MEDIATOR BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA AND LUANDA.

ADVANTAGES: /

-- WE AVOID POLITICAL PANDORA'S BOX WHICH WOULD BE OPENED BY SENATOR TUNNEY'S MEDIATION.

-- WE WOULD AVOID FURTHER DAMAGING CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH SOUTH AFRICA.

-- POLITICAL CIRCLES IN US OR PRETORIA COULD NOT CLAIM WE WERE UNDER MORAL OBLIGATION TO HELP DEFEND SOUTH AFRICA IN THE EVENT MEDIATION EFFORTS BROKE DOWN DUE TO MPLA INTRANSIGENCE.

-- WE WOULD RETAIN THE OPTION OF ENTERING INTO TALKS WITH SECRET

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MPLA AT TIME AND PLACE OF OUR CHOICE.

-- FACT OF US-MPLA TALKS, WHICH WOULD QUICKLY SURFACE, WOULD ALARM KINSHASA AND LUSAKA AND UNDERCUT ANY EFFORTS UNDERWAY TO PRESSURE LUANDA INTO MAKING CONCESSIONS.

-- TO THE EXTENT THAT WE MAY BECOME ALARMED OVER BREAKDOWN IN MEDIATION EFFORTS BETWEEN PRETORIA AND LUANDA AND THE PROSPECTS OF IMMINENT CONFLICT, WE RETAIN THE OPTION OF AN INDEPENDENT MEDIATION INITIATIVE THROUGH MORE SUITABLE INTERLOCUTORS.

DISADVANTAGES:

-- WE MAY MISS A LAST MINUTE OPPORTUNITY TO AVERT A DISASTROUS CONFLICT.

-- IF CONFLICT OCCURS, TUNNEY AND OTHERS COULD ACCUSE STATE DEPARTMENT OF HAVING BLOCKED MEDIATION EFFORT.

-- WE COULD ALSO MISS USEFUL PRETEXT FOR BACKING INTO TALKS WITH MPLA ON TERMS FACE-SAVING TO BOTH PARTIES.

BUREAU VIEWS:

ON BALANCE, AF FAVORS OPTIOM 2, TURNING DOWN SENATOR
TUNNEY'S EFFORT TO PLAY THE ROLE OF MEDIATOR.

RECOMMENDATION:

-- THAT YOU AUTHORIZE DEPARTMENT TO INFORM SENATOR TUNNEY
ALONG LINES OF OPTION 2.

APPROVE.....DISAPPROVE.....

DRAFTED: AF/C:TRBUCHANAN INGERSOLL

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